

Top 10 branding blunders

These missteps can put the kibosh on your community's brand success.

Make your brand just about a logo and strap line

A logo and strap line alone is not a brand. It is unrealistic to expect these tools to do all the heavy lifting from a marketing perspective in a community; other branding activities must be put in place.

Proceed without research

Branding without research is like building a house without a blue print. It can be done, but the end result won't be square! A solid body of qualitative and quantitative research is the only way to determine what your brand essence actually is.

Ignore your culture and heritage focusing solely on your aspiration

The best brands do give a community room and resolve to develop. But if you build your brand entirely upon dreams for the future, it's the equivalent of false advertising.

Engage the press for the first time during the unveiling

Local media are essentially vocal stakeholders in your community. Work to obtain buy-in throughout the process by involving them in various aspects of the research.

Brand by committee

Branding is not about compromise or even consensus. It is about determining the strong singular message that will define your community. The quickest route to watered-down pabulum is trying to please all the people all the time.

Apply strict controls for usage by private sector and other public agencies

Brand usage cannot be a free for all, but if you are too controlling few organizations will want

to embrace it. Leave room for customization so people can feel like they really "own" it.

Reveal your brand to the public without stakeholder buy-in

Before launching your brand, launch an educational campaign to build grassroots support for the effort among stakeholders. This turns community heavy hitters into advocates rather than adversaries.

Have your community vote among several logo choices OR Make a contest of creating your community's strap line.

This is branding by committee taken to the extreme. And the fastest way to disenfranchise your citizens is by asking for their input and then ignoring it.

Brand yourself

Self-branding is a little bit like self-analysis. As part of the community, you are too close to the situation to clearly identify and solve the problems.

Announce the brand without some high-profile implementation

Unveiling the brand before you have brought it to life in some high-profile ways (signage, bus wraps, website, etc.) is asking for a lukewarm response ... and often criticism of city government's inability to follow-through.

... McEachern